

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2020

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

As members that represent communities along the South Atlantic coast, we know the important role that access to healthy fisheries play in supporting our state's economies. We appreciate your support for South Atlantic red snapper, and we ask that you continue to support fishermen as they work to recover from the devastating effects of COVID-19.

Thank you for finalizing the rule for Amendment 29. This new rule requires the use of best practices when fishing for snapper-grouper species, including red snapper. The high rate of release mortality for red snapper contributes to the difficulty in managing the important species. With implementation of this rule, release mortality will decrease, providing more available fish for fishermen to catch and keep.

This year's four-day red snapper season was a welcome reprieve from some of the difficulty caused by COVID-19. However, the South Atlantic has seen ever shorter red snapper fishing seasons over the last three years. Since the fishery reopened in 2017 for nine days, subsequent seasons have been six days and five days. However, even these short seasons have added jobs and millions of dollars to the region's economy. In 2018 alone, the six-day recreational red snapper season in the South Atlantic added over \$13 million to GDP.^[1]

While the four-day season offered a glimmer of hope in a bleak year, we hear regularly from our constituents about the rebounding red snapper stock. By all accounts, the stock is stronger than it has been in recent memory, but the season lengths do not reflect that. It is our hope that, as data becomes available from the July season and the positive effects of Amendment 29 are realized, that you will consider additional opportunities for South Atlantic fishers to access red snapper in 2020.

We appreciate your work to balance sustainable management of this vital species and the economic needs of fishermen struggling because of COVID-19. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with you to ensure that coastal economies who rely on a vibrant fishing industry have access to this important fishery.

Sincerely,



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

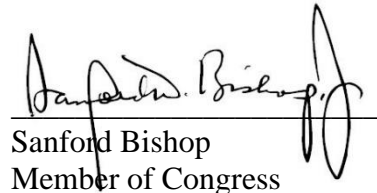
^[1] "Economic Contribution of the 2018 Recreational Red Snapper Season in the South Atlantic." American Sportfishing Association, April 2, 2019. <https://asafishing.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ASA-South-Atlantic-Red-Snapper-Economics-3-22-19.pdf>.



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



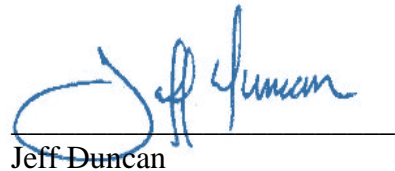
Austin Scott
Member of Congress



Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress



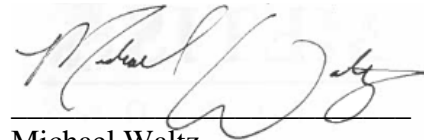
Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress



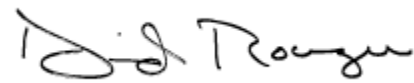
Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Francis Rooney
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Michael Waltz
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David Rouzer
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Jody Hice
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Brian Mast
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Tom Rice
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